

US FOREIGN POLICY IN THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF 2009

By My Chau

In the first six months of 2009, the Obama Administration focused on too domestic priorities: to resolve the financial crisis, bring the country out of economic recession and reverse the global economic crisis; and to defend domestic security as well as combat terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The Obama Administration has made important adjustments in its foreign policy toward greater practicalism, multilateralism, flexibility. These are seen in all regions, Middle East and South Asia, Europe, Africa and Latin America as well as Asia and the Pacific.

In Asia and Pacific, The Obama Administration has upgraded its relations with Japan, “a friendly and reliable ally”. It considers its relations with China as the most important bilateral relations. It has also made active efforts to develop relations with India while adopting a flexible approach to North Korea. In general, the US has adopted a more reconciliatory approach in its foreign policy however, success of this approach has to be seen in the light of reaction from big powers as well as domestic interests. These new approaches will meet more challenges and need to be adjusted later.

RUSSIA AND US: GOOD RESTART

By Phan Doan Nam

With the different documents signed on the occasion of the first Russian-US Summit, relations between the two countries have seen a new restart, putting an end to 20-year-old crisis. The Summit was held against the background of the biggest economic and monetary crisis since the beginning of 1930s. This crisis is equated to a crisis of the model for US liberal capitalism. It also means the failure of a unipolar world upheld by G. Bush and a multipolar world is in formation which helps countries to enhance its position on the international arena and promote cooperation in resolving global problems such as the economic crisis, pandemics, climate change, international terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction etc. This resulted in a fair balance among powers. The US remains the most powerful and richest country; however, it is a country at war.

Leaders of both the US and Russia see it imperative to restart relations free from Cold War mentality. This culminates in the signing of a Joint Understanding and adoption of a Joint Declaration on Afghanistan and many other documents. This restart has been considered positive not only by the US and Russia but also by Germany and Japan. However, the two sides did not reach any agreement on the deployment of NMD in Poland and the Czech Republic as well as NATO expansion to the East. The world has to wait and see how these agreements are implemented as there remains many Russophobes.

THE UNITED STATES: DIFFICULTIES IN GLOBALIZATION

By H.E. Ambassador Nguyen Tam Chien

The current global economic crisis is the most severe since the Great Depression in 1929 and 1933. The search for the reasons would require reflections. However, the first reason cited is the real estate bubble which many think as one dimension of the crisis. The second one is the increase in US import and decline in US export which contribute to its double deficits and thus to the economic instability. The US is facing intense competition in the textile and garment industry, the manufacturing industry, especially automobile one. The third oft-cited reason is the challenges of globalization to state economic regulation in the interest of development and those of the ruling circles. These challenges are greater in view of increasing complexity of production and business, especially in the financial sector.

Though many predict that the ongoing crisis would end in 2010, its recovery would bear the mark of cyclic development over a short term. However, over the long term, development of the US economy would depend on new breakthroughs in science and technology, especially biotechnology, IT, nanotechnology and new energy etc. It is obvious that globalization it is necessary for the US to work out fundamental changes.

US INTEREST IN EAST SEA

By Pham Thuy Trang

Brunei, China, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam have all staked their sovereignty claims to the territorial waters and continental shelf in the East Sea. Additionally, the East Sea is also the scene of piracy, environmental pollution etc. For the US, the East Sea is also a hotspot. As early as 1995, the US issued a statement against the use or threat of violence to resolve disputes in the East Sea. In recent months, US warships encountered Chinese ones five times and the two sides exchanged hard words. In the interest of the two countries, they agreed to quietly settle these incidents. With all these in the background, the author tries to analyze US interests in the area. As a recent US report indicated US security interests cover the defence of the US homeland, territory, citizens, allies and interests; regional prosperity and the absence of any dominant powers that would threaten or impede US access or interests etc. The author tries to look at different US interests: freedom of navigation, economic and security interests, military interest. From these interests, the US does not support any parties to the conflict but believe that the dispute can be resolved peacefully. In the meantime, the US makes every effort to improve relations with its allies and partners with a view to promote a long-term solution to the dispute while strengthening its relations with China. Furthermore, it encourages ASEAN to cooperate for the same purpose.

US “non-engagement” would not be able to defend its interest in the East Sea and the US should engage more in the area.

US FOREIGN POLICY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC: VIEWS OF REGIONAL SCHOLARS

Khong Thi Binh and Nguyen Vu Tung

The two authors give us a brief survey of the different views expressed at the annual Asia-Pacific Roundtable held from 31 May to 5 June 2009 in Kuala Lumpur. The atmosphere is that of cautious optimism when scholars assess the changes in US foreign policy when Obama became President. Some even spoke of a new era in international relations. However, others said this does not mean a vast improvement in Asia and the Pacific as the new has not definitely formed yet, the US is in deep economic crisis, and US approaches in foreign policy are still characterized by leadership role rather than partnership.

For Asia and the Pacific, the US is likely to enhance its cooperation with the region, particularly with Japan, China and ASEAN. In the meantime, many others talked of decoupling in the relations between the US and Asia. Many see US-ASEAN relations as a passive US reaction to better relations between the region and China. The region lacks an all-region security mechanism as such a mechanism is difficult to cover all security issues, traditional and non-traditional and should not be eliminatory and hierarchal. In the final analysis, security mechanism should be placed in US influence and the role of the US for regional security is still very important.

VIETNAMESE-JAPANESE RELATIONS IN BUILDING EAST ASIAN COMMUNITY

By Dinh Thi Hien Luong

East Asian regionalism, in essence, is an interactive network of bilateral relations and this remains a prominent feature in the building of an East Asian Community. The author attempts to find the difference with the past and offered an analysis of Vietnamese-Japanese relations in the context of EAC.

Bilateral relations between Vietnam and Japan have seen a new chapter. Japan is Vietnam's leading trading partner, ODA provider. From 1992 to 2007, Vietnam was the biggest recipient of Japanese ODA valued at US\$ 13.5 billion, accounting for more than 30% of total ODA for Vietnam. Japan's FDI for 2006 and 2007 increased ten times over that for 2000 and 2005. With different agreements to create a better environment, "an explosion of Japanese investment" in Vietnam is foreseen. The Vietnamese-Japanese Economic Partnership Agreement signed in December 2008 laid the foundation for strengthened relations in all areas. In the political field, comprehensive relations between the two countries have been established with regular exchange of visits by their senior leaders and annual dialogue at different levels in economic matters as well as security and defence. Relations are also extended to cultural and social areas.

Strengthened bilateral relations have contributed to the process of community building in East Asia. It acts as a catalyst in the process and set as an example for reconciliation for other countries to follow. It also creates a premise for mutually beneficial cooperation between a small country and a power. It can be considered as part of a larger effort to integrate into the world for development.

AUSTRALIAN ODA TO VIETNAM

By Bui Dinh Vien

Australia has over the past 18 years increased its aid to Vietnam. Vietnam is now the fourth biggest recipient of Australian ODA. In 1991, Australia resumed official development aid to Vietnam and its ODA for 1994-1998 and 1998-2002 was US\$ 436 million whereas this increased to US\$ 72.1 million for 2003-2004 fiscal year and US\$ 77.3 million for 2005-2006.

Australian ODA is targeted at poverty alleviation (accounting for 44% of total Australian aid to Vietnam), human resources development, infrastructure and good governance in that order. However, in some areas the disbursement rate is low, 45.91% for agriculture, 80.90% for human resources development and 84.84 for infrastructure. The reasons for this are (1) quality of project design (first design does not usually conform to implementation and procedure for project approval remains complicated; (2) differences in disbursement between Australia and other countries; (3) limited capacity of project officials; (4) organizational structure making it difficult to reach agreement on objectives of the project. In the foreseeable future the two sides should harmonize procedures in conformity with the Hanoi Statement on harmonization of assistance procedures, prioritize ODA projects in accordance with Vietnam's objectives, and give greater autonomy over ODA projects to Vietnam.

As grants from Australia would now decline, the Australian government should consider assistance to Vietnam in the form of long-term preferential credits. Australian grants should only be maintained as a catalyst to enhance capacity and as technical assistance to implement the Vietnamese Government's strategic programmes.

THE SOUTH CHINA SEA: SEEKING A NEW LEGAL ARRANGEMENT FOR PROMOTING STABILITY, PEACE AND COOPERATION

By LLD Nguyen Hong Thao and

Assoc. Prof. Ramses Amer

The South China Sea has long been regarded as a major source of tension and instability in Southeast Asia. Managing the risk of possible open conflicts over disputed islands, maritime zones, and resources in the South China Sea has been and still is a major challenge for the region. Since 1990 many efforts bilateral and multilateral as well as confidence-building measures to manage the possible conflicts in the region have been recorded. The main purpose of this study is to analyze and assess the progress made in terms of conflict management among the claimants, through the Workshops on managing conflicts in the South China Sea 1990 – 2000, and, through the ASEAN and China dialogue on the South China Sea is outlined and assessed The impact of the United Nations Law of the Sea of 1982 and the role of recent judgments of the International Court of Justice concerning to the disputes in this region are examined in the study.

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA AND THE DPRK: STAGES OF HISTORY

By Tran Thi Nhung

Through the years, relations between the ROK and the DPRK have not met the aspiration of the peoples of the two parts of Korea and the world people. The goal of national reunification remains distant. A look back into history would help answer the question.

The Korean War from 1950 to 1953 resulted in greater mistrust and hostility, hampering efforts to dialogue and reconciliation. In the 20 years that followed, although there were no large-scale wars, conflicts happened. However, as the Cold War waned, contacts were established between the two regions. This was interrupted as the Cold War gained in severity. In the 1980's, President Chun Doo Hwan tried to foster greater confidence among the two parts of Korea. As the Cold War came to an end, the two parts started their Summit meetings with the first one in 1990. These led to better relations between them. Though interrupted by tension in 1996, relations improved in the 1990 which culminated in the visit by ROK President Kim Dae-Jung and the signing of a joint declaration on national reconciliation and reunification. However, the nuclear crisis in 2002 and the nuclear tests in 2006 dashed hope of reconciliation. A shift in the relations was seen in the visit by President Lee Myung-Bak to DRPK in 2008. The pressure by ROK on the DPRK was counterproductive, relations were at a standstill. The situation has worsened ever since.

With ups and downs in the history of relations between the parts of Korea, it would be difficult to predict what would happen in the future. With President Lee Myung bak in power and the changing nature of DPRK policies, great difficulties are compounded by elements that runs counter to improvement of their bilateral relations.

WHY SHOULD THE DPRK PRODUCE NUCLEAR WEAPONS: PROSPECT FOR THE CURRENT CRISIS

By Chuc Ba Tuyen

The nuclear problem of the DPR Korea has been controversial. However, a question should be addressed is why the DPRK is determined to pursue the nuclear development programme?

Firstly, national defence and economic development are high priorities in Dark's policies. The DPRK sees it that development of missiles and nuclear weapons would enable it to defend the country better and deter while the sale of missile technology could earn foreign currency and thus making reinvestment into the economy. Secondly, the DPRK has drawn lessons from Iraq. The overthrow of Saddam Hussein in 2003 was explained by the lack of nuclear weapons in Iraq. Additionally, the DPRK thought that nuclear weapons would give it a political vantage point. Thirdly, the DPRK sees the American war in Iraq as an opportunity for the country to develop nuclear weapons without being punished by the US. Fourthly, it considers the development of nuclear weapons as a bargaining chip.

All the reasons above explain why negotiation after negotiations have broken down and no definite solution can be found. It is difficult to imagine the DPRK to pay attention to disarmament except when it is accepted as a nuclear weapon state. With the US saying that would not be possible, the situation runs the risk of going beyond control. In the final analysis, a denuclearized Korean peninsular would meet the aspiration of

the Korean people and the people the world over. Therefore, we can hope that in a not too distant future, we would see a peaceful, reunified and stable Korean peninsular.

DEVELOPMENT TRENDS IN ASIA-PACIFIC INTEGRATION

By Luan Thuy Duong

Asia and Pacific integration develops under the impact of many factors with the world trends toward peace and development as the mainstream. However, the need for security, political, economic and trade among regional countries forms the most important factor. Countries in the region have paid increasing attention to building the Asia-Pacific Community. This manifests itself in the ASEAN+3 frameworks. However, differences in culture, religion, area and population sizes, especially differences in economic development have impeded the process of integration.

Asia and the Pacific lacks a leading force sufficiently strong to accelerate the integration. Moreover, the regional integration is also affected by another factor from the outside. The US played a very important role in the process. That is why regional integration is still in the form of free trade area and subregional integration. In security and political integration, the region has seen emergence of regional cooperation mechanism. In ASEAN, these are ASEAN+1, ASEAN+3, the East Asia Summit, ARF and the ASEAN Security and Political Community. In the future, regional integration will be in the form of the ASEAN Community, the East Asian Community and the Asia-Pacific

Community. In all these, ASEAN would continue to be the driving force only when its shortcomings are overcome.

FROM THAKSIN TO THE RED-ORANGE WAR CONTRIBUTION TO BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THAI POLITICS

By Ha Anh Tuan

With the formation of the New Politics Party by the Orange and the United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship by the Red and the setting up of television and radio stations, the crisis in Thailand took on special significance. This crisis dates back to the time when Thaksin took power in 2001. His authoritarian rule and populist policies have touched the nerve of other power in Thailand. The country has been plunged into a crisis with the Red and the Orange taking turns to overthrowing governments. It is not simple to give reasons to the ongoing crisis. However, one can elaborate three approaches: (1) hierarchal culture (sakdhina) which helps to analyze better the crisis. This approach helps explain the overthrow of Thaksin in 2006, the successive coups in recent Thai history; (2) social transformation approach, Thaksin's populist policies and strategy to develop the country as an enterprise have created momentum for democratization in Thailand; (3) political power approach explains the ongoing crisis as a problem of power.

Different approaches would give you different solution to the crisis. Therefore, a combination of different approaches, practical and

traditional would tend to be better; however, it is not easy to have a radical solution to the problem.

CULTURAL DIPLOMACY: HOW CHINA PROMOTES ITS NATIONAL IMAGE

By Thach Ha

In the 1990's, China made every effort to build its national image as "a power sharing close connection with the international community and making positive contribution to the preservation of peace". This forms the basis for China's "peaceful rise" and later its "peaceful development" which, in turn, serve as the guiding principles for the country's public and cultural diplomacy. China has used table tennis and then panda diplomacy. It is now making efforts to build up a system of Confucius institutes to promote its culture, especially thoughts by Confucius. The country also launched in 2004 a plan to send voluntary teachers abroad to teach Chinese.

Additionally, China has set up 7 cultural centres. It has held "Cultural Year" in countries with culture different from China's. Starting with the Sino-French Cultural Year in 2004, China held the Sino-Russian Cultural Year, Chinese Year in Austria and Italy etc. These were to build a good image in the eyes of friends. The Beijing Olympic has also given China an opportunity to build upon its image as a civilized, modern, potential, safe and environment-friendly country. China has also built its

image through historic films so popular in developing and less developed countries. It seeks to promote China through its cuisine. All efforts have been made to project a China of big territory, time-honoured history and culture etc. This tendency would have great implications in the formulation and implementation of the country's foreign policy.

TRENDS IN WORLD CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION IMPACTS ON MASS MEDIA AND CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

By Le Thanh Binh

The world has recently witnessed changes in nature of culture. Multi media has become a buzz word. There is an increasing cultural diversity and high degree of universalization of common value. Modern culture is characterized by increasing participation of new communication means which can affect the lifestyles and habit of a mass of the population, these are mobile communication, internet etc and by subculture (culture of a group of people sharing an interest). Cultural diplomacy has taken on special significance. Moreover, culture and communication may affect macro management, people's confidence with the promotion of transparency, honesty and tolerance etc.

For Vietnam, the author gives some recommendations for the promotion of cultural diplomacy, the use of multi media communication in the struggle with forces opposing us. With 2009 selected as the Year of Cultural Diplomacy, cultural activities should be carried out effectively.